

JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

MILDRED JOYCE

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JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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Jay Horner  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

Interviewee

Richard H. Joyce  
(signature)

Route 1 Box 306  
(address)

Hilmington, Del.  
(city & state)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)



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INTERVIEWEE: Mildred Joyce

INTERVIEWER: Jay Honrud

INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with Mrs. Mildred Joyce for the Oral History Project of Joliet Junior College by Jay Honrud at Mrs. Joyce's home on August 1, 1975, at nine o'clock in the morning.

HONRUD: Mrs. Joyce, I understand that you were born in this area. Where exactly was that?

JOYCE: Well, exactly in the country near Deselm, Illinois -- Rockville, I think, is the township and it's in the vicinity of Manteno. That's where I was baptized in a church in Manteno. But it was definitely a rural area -- farming.

HONRUD: Is the house still standing?

JOYCE: Yes, it is and in very, very good condition. It's a large, white frame house.

HONRUD: When did you come to Wesley Township?

JOYCE: You mean now, this time, since I left Chicago?

HONRUD: No, before. Did you live in Wesley Township before?

JOYCE: Oh, no. I never lived in Wesley Township. See, my folks left the farm and went to Chicago; and then when we came back, we came into the town of Wilmington. So I never lived out here until two years ago. July 6, 1973, I took up my residence here.

HONRUD: Mrs. Joyce, I know that your grandparents settled in this area



from other countries in Europe. Can you tell us about them?

JOYCE: Well, I'll try. They came from Denmark -- both my paternal grandparents. They were married in Denmark and came here with three children at the time -- two sons and a daughter. The other members of the family were born here. They came from a town called Hjoring. It's spelled rather unusually: H-J-O-R-I-N-G, I think. As the story is told, my grandfather came from those they called the Xēne Dansk. I suppose, interpreted, we would say "the wealthy class." My grandmother had worked as a milkmaid in the property owned by my grandfather's people; and when he married her, he was very much in disgrace by marrying someone in the lower class -- poorer class, I'd say -- not lower class. So that may have had some bearing on them coming to America, although I really couldn't say whether it did or not. He probably, like many of the young men of that day, had that urge to come to the new world. He had served in the army for, I believe, eighteen months, the required time that they had to serve. As he had put in his service, they decided to leave and come to America. They came right into this area. Now what brought them here. . . there must have been some friends, Danish people, I imagine, who had come into this area previously because that's the way most of them came over. I know after my grandparents were settled here, there were many who came here because of their influence; and the standard joke was that the Danes had settled along the river in the sandy ground and the Irish went up into the prairie where they got the cream of the land. But I think my grandparents were very happy here and raised their family and enjoyed living along the banks of the Kankakee.

HONRUD: What did they do for a living?





JOYCE: They were farmers, definitely farming. I think grandfather's property was probably about forty acres to begin with; and then as he was able to accumulate over the years, he finally had a farm of, I believe they said, 156 acres. I don't think it was quite 160. I remember, they used to have rye and barley which are not crops that are farmed very much in our area any more. We're concentrating now on corn and soybeans. But, of course, that was way before the days of soybeans. They didn't know anything about them at that time. So they had the small grain -- quite a bit of rye and corn also. Then they had their stock -- the cattle and the horses, of course. They had to work with none of the farm machinery that they have today.

HONRUD: He and his family were the only ones that managed the farm?

JOYCE: Yes.

HONRUD: These were your father's parents?

JOYCE: My father's parents -- Nelson and Christina Wurtz.

HONRUD: Can you tell us about your mother's parents?

JOYCE: Yes, they came from Scotland, and they settled in Braidwood where the mines were and my grandfather was a deep coal miner. He went down into the shafts. They were here not long before the Diamond Disaster, which you probably have heard of, over there in '86? I've forgotten the date. I should know that. Yes, I think in '86 because I recall my mom telling that her mother wasn't quite sure which shaft my grandfather was in; and there was great turmoil, of course, and anguish until they learned he was not in the "doomed" shaft, at any rate. But as soon as his sons were old



enough to provide in any way, they didn't go into the mines with their dad. They took their dad out, and they bought farm land farther east around the Deselm area where I mentioned before.

HONRUD: Do you have any recollections or stories or incidents that your grandparents would tell about this area?

JOYCE: Well, not too poignant anything right in through here. I remember, of course, my mother telling that in Braidwood the miners had to buy at the company store. You've probably heard that story before that they were not given cash. They were given some kind of script, and they had to spend that all in the company store. There was very, very little cash given. And I've often thought about that song that came out not too long ago, telling St. Peter he "couldn't go to the pearly gates because he owed his soul to the company store." And it really was quite that way in those days. Now the stories here from this area. . . they tell about the young men of the farming community here would in the wintertime, of course, cut ice. There was an icehouse on this side of the river, right across from Custer Park; and the ice was put up for the Higginbotham Ice Company. I don't know the year, but it was struck by lightening at one time and burned to the ground and was never rebuilt, they said. But in those days ice on the river would get much thicker than any I have seen since I have been here. It used to be a foot thick at times. They'd drive their horses out with their cutting machines and cut the ice into blocks and bring them up. Then, too, another thing they used to do here was to cut down the trees and take them to Braidwood to the mines to be used for props; and they'd bring back a load of coal. Sometimes it was a two-day job. They'd go over there one day, and sometimes they would stop at a place right on





this side of the bridge. . . It was a hotel and tavern type of a business. Steffen was the name of the people. I don't know who lives there now, but Mr. Gadberry lived in that location for a long while. He used to furnish transportation between Wilmington and Joliet -- of course, that's a long time before your time -- before we had any bus lines, you know. But, I think, life was lived very, very simply here. And they did with what they had -- what they raised and produced themselves. And then that other story I mentioned about my grandfather coming here in '67 -- I don't know the month. But in '71 the Chicago fire occurred. They had noticed a glow in the sky toward the north and they knew something was happening, possibly some great conflagration. They didn't know, of course, until several days later that it was the Chicago fire.

HONRUD: Do you have any idea how word did travel?

JOYCE: No, I wonder how it did myself because that was before the telephone -- that is, before the people through here had telephones. Now when the telephone first came into use around here, my grandfather had the two telephones. There were two systems. One was the Chicago Telephone Company and the other, the Northwestern Company. That was before they consolidated into the Illinois Bell. If you wanted to call Chicago, you'd have to use the Chicago telephone. So some of the neighbors would come -- whenever there was an occasion to call Chicago -- to Nelson Wurtz's to use the telephone. However, that accommodation was abused too many times, and grandfather had the Chicago phone taken out. The Northwestern was just local. You could call around in the local area -- Joliet and the periphery around here. That was probably just shortly before they consolidated the telephone systems. But there used to be two telephone offices in



Wilmington -- the Chicago Telephone Office and the Northwestern Telephone Office. And that, of course, was staffed by operators. If you wanted to know the time, you would call the operator to find that out. If you wanted to know if the "Accommodation" had gone through yet, you called the operator to ask her. The operators at the telephone companies were really bureaus of information. There's no doubt about it, they rendered a great service. And if the fire bell rang in those days -- we didn't have the siren; we had the bell -- you'd call the operator and ask where the fire was. /Laughter/ You'd get all your information firsthand and given courteously, too.

HONRUD: Do you have any idea when the telephone became popular, or when your father got the first phone?

JOYCE: No, I wouldn't remember. Of course, there'd be so many parties on the line. There'd be as many as eight, perhaps as many as twelve on the line. This is when my parents lived up on the prairie where I was born. There was a man who played the violin very well. He used to play at the dances. So sometimes he would get on the line with his violin and they'd all take their telephone receivers down and listen for a little while. /Laughter/ I was born in 1902, and I suppose that telephones came into use in, would we say, the late 1800's? I wouldn't know when the telephones came into our area, but I would think around then -- the late 1890's at any rate.

HONRUD: Of course, your parents met in this area, didn't they?

JOYCE: Yes; Mom was working for people by the name of Moultons in the house which is now the Francis home -- and Dad was living in this area





right here, farming for his father.

HONRUD: Do you know when that was?

JOYCE: They were married October 28 in 1897.

HONRUD: This is their wedding picture?

JOYCE: Yes.

HONRUD: How did they take pictures in those days? Do you remember what the camera was like?

JOYCE: I don't remember about that, but I remember how they used to take them in Wilmington. I'd had my picture taken. They had a big, black box that they'd put a black covering of some kind over it. Then they'd squeeze something out here, you know, and you had to sit so long that you'd really get frozen by the time they would really tell you that your picture was taken. /Laughter/ As far as the real system, I know they always used a tripod the same way they took those school pictures that I showed you. So it was a far cry from our little instamatic. /Laughter/

HONRUD: How old were your parents when they were first married?

JOYCE: Mama was nineteen and Dad was twenty-one.

HONRUD: Was that a fairly common age?

JOYCE: I think it was, yes. Of course, some women married earlier than that. We have seventeen-year-olds and sixteen-year-olds.

HONRUD: Did your parents go to school?





JOYCE: Mama did. Mama finished her eighth grade, but Dad didn't. The farmer boys used to go just during the season when there wasn't much work on the farm. They had to quit about in March to get into the fields again, and then, of course, that was it. Then in September maybe they couldn't go to school because the crops were not harvested. Perhaps, they didn't get to school until December. . . so they probably went to school December, January, February and maybe part of March -- only about four months a year. The teachers -- many of them were even younger than the boys were by the time the men got done with their schooling -- when they got so big they wouldn't fit in the seats any longer. Dad went to what they called the Moulton School. That was a little school down here. . . Well, it's on the Ballou Road just about. . . not where the Texaco is, you know, that's on this side, but those warehouses or something that are on the east side of (Route) 102. They're big brick buildings. They used to use them; I don't know if they do any more. But that's just about where the Moulton School was located. Of course, Mama went to school in Braidwood -- finished her eighth grade there. Back in those days an eighth grade education was comparable to the next generation's high school. Now, of course, we've gone on to feel that it's college or else. I believe there's something to think about in that. If these youngsters that are growing up are not really college material, it's foolish for parents to sacrifice, like many of them have, to send them to college when they're perhaps better to go into a vocational school, a technical school of some sort, instead of the regular academic course found in college. I think the thought on that has changed a little bit in the last few years.

HONRUD: I think they are coming around to that, yes.



JOYCE: Yes, I do too, because it's foolish what it means now. Of course, we felt, Peter and I, that our educations were high school and a little bit of Normal that I had, but we felt that our children should have a college education because we hadn't had one, which they did. I don't know what they'll feel about their own /Laughter/ when they get to that age.

HONRUD: Careers are always an important aspect of life. I know both of your parents worked before they were married -- your mother worked as a hired girl. Can you tell us about that?

JOYCE: Well, I'm sure that her duties were very, very many -- arduous, too or course. The work of the women in the home in those days -- they had everything to do -- washing, ironing, the churning, the baking and everything that constituted keeping a home. It had to be done. The old saying about "a man's work is from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done." That was very true, particularly in that generation. And I think her salary was seventy-five cents a week. Then when she left and went to Chicago, for I think, two years -- maybe less than that -- she worked then as a nursemaid for two small children in a doctor's family. And there she got the fabulous sum of two dollars a week. That's what she saved to have a little dowry when she was getting married. She came back to the farm.

HONRUD: Now when she was a hired lady, did she stay there all the time?

JOYCE: Yes, she had residence right there. Dad worked, too, for the farmers around here at times and he got a dollar a day, that is thirty dollars a month and room and board, which was very good, because he said you bought a good pair of work shoes for fifty cents in those days and the same way with girls who worked in the homes. Where seventy-five cents





which is only a pittance, of course, to us now -- still, it was clear money because they had their room and their board, and, of course, people who could employ domestic help, were people who were kindly, usually, you know. They took good care of the people who were working for them. It sounds dreadful to us in this generation -- I mean, that monetary figure. But, after all, it wasn't so bad because now we just handle a lot of money, but we don't have a great deal to put by either.

HONRUD: Did your mother get time off, like one day a week, or a vacation of some sort?

JOYCE: I suppose she did if she wished to take it. I just never heard her say that -- only when she would go with what she had saved up, over to Braidwood to her folks. The fare from Wilmington to Braidwood was twenty-five cents.

HONRUD: And how did they get there?

JOYCE: On the train -- the Chicago and Alton. There was one that went over in the morning, and then they could come back again in the evening, so that was usually her trip home, but she probably wouldn't go but maybe once a month or every six weeks or so to take over the money that she had saved.

HONRUD: Was it very common to be a hired lady?

JOYCE: It was for people of their very modest means; yes, it was.

HONRUD: And how old was she?

JOYCE: I think when Mama first started, she was about fourteen years old, because she had finished eighth grade. I think that would be about the



age. But she didn't go to the Moulton's when she first came to Wilmington. She went to the town of Wilmington with a family named Fuller, and they lived in the house which we eventually lived in as a family -- Mom and Dad and I. I don't know who's living in that house now. It's on Kankakee Street. They sold it to a Mrs. Phelan, but I don't know who has that property now. Then she went from there on to the Moulton's, I suppose. She was getting about fifty cents at Fuller's. She got a little increase in wages. /Laughter/

HONRUD: Your mother worked up until she was married?

JOYCE: Yes.

HONRUD: Most ladies had enough to do in the house when they got married?

JOYCE: Yes, there was no outside work after you married and settled down to raise a family. /Laughter/ Dad always had a couple of hired men also, because he was farming quite a tract of land. So the wife had all of the work to do, too -- the washing of the clothes of the hired man, and, of course, the feeding. So she had no time for outside work or very little socializing either. They would sometimes have a get-together as far as the community was concerned for maybe a barn dance, which is becoming popular again. Sometimes different church organizations would have ice cream socials or such like. Of course, they're having a few of those nowadays, too.

HONRUD: Where were the barn dances held?

JOYCE: They would be held in some of the farmers' barns that they had cleaned out, you know. They used to have, in those days also, halls-- Grange halls, they were called. I don't know where they got the name





Grange, but they were located in townships. And they, too, were a source of get-togethers for those rural people -- the farmers would have meetings if something came up that they had to have a meeting for, or they would have their social functions, too. They had their potlucks and such like. The only Grange that I recall was on. . . it's now Route 53, out near Elwood. Well, really on Manhattan Road. It was a Grange hall there right on the corner between Route 53 and Manhattan Road as you turn off 53 on the one side. And on the other side was the little brown church. I don't know what denomination it was or whether it was non-denominational or not, but both of those buildings are gone and have been gone for a long time. There isn't the rural community as we knew it -- as I knew it as a child and as my parents knew it either because of automobiles, I suppose. People can get into the towns and into the cities. They just don't have that community life that they had before.

HONRUD: What were the barn dances like? Did just local people that had talent play instruments?

JOYCE: Yes, but there was always somebody in a community who could play a fiddle, and there was usually somebody who could call (a square dance). It was very, very local, yes. Very local, community-wise. I don't know whether they ever hired anybody to come in to call or to play -- maybe they might have very infrequently. But it was pretty much the whole community.

HONRUD: What did your father do for a living when they first got married?

JOYCE: He was a farmer, definitely.

HONRUD: Where did he farm?





JOYCE: There at the place where I was born near Deselm, Rockville township. And then he left there and went to Chicago.

HONRUD: How many acres did he farm?

JOYCE: I think Dad had 160 there.

HONRUD: That was quite a few then.

JOYCE: Yes, it required several teams of horses to farm. His brother, Uncle John Wurtz, lived in the same area and also my mother's people, the Somers. We all lived on the same road. Living on the same road there, I remember. . . of course, in those days the births were at home. There was no such thing as taking an expectant mother or woman to the hospital, you know. So I was born in this house; and my uncle, who is not too many years my senior, came down to see me and when he went back home, as the story goes, his mother, my grandmother, said, "Well, who does Mary's baby look like?" And he said, "Ah, she looks like Shep when he was drowning in the creek." /Laughter/ Shep was his dog. I suppose perhaps my hair was. . . I don't know why. We often laughed about that afterwards, and he used to be a little bit embarrassed because he was my godfather /Laughter/ later on.

HONRUD: Do you remember what land sold for per acre?

JOYCE: Oh dear, I wish I did. No, I don't, but I suppose it was only a pittance to what it is now. Dad did not own this land; he farmed it; he rented it. I just can't recall. I wish I had asked Mom; she might have known.

HONRUD: Do you remember who he rented it from?



JOYCE: The people's name was Vroom. They apparently came into town. They lived right across from the Central School, but I really don't know much about them. The people that live on the place now, their name is Fairchild, but whether they're owners. . . I suppose they may be owners.

HONRUD: How many people did it take to farm your father's land? How many people worked?

JOYCE: He always had a hired man; and sometimes when there was some reason for it, he'd have more than one. In those days there used to be the itinerant farmhand, too, who used to come looking for a job for just a temporary thing -- during the harvesting probably or in the early spring getting the crops in, you know. So it seems as though there were times when he had more than one hired man, but always one at any rate.

HONRUD: Where did they stay?

JOYCE: They boarded right there, too; and I suppose, like himself, he probably gave them a dollar a day like he used to get. That, I don't know, but I know that they stayed there and that Mom took care of their washing and also feeding them, of course.

HONRUD: How long did he farm?

JOYCE: I thought you'd be asking me that one, and I was trying to figure that out. I think I was about four years old when they went to Chicago. I don't remember much about it. They probably had lived there. . . I wasn't born until they had been married about six years, so he must have farmed, I would say -- we'll just hazard a guess, about ten years. Then he didn't farm after that. They came back to Wilmington.





HONRUD: Why did he leave?

JOYCE: Why did he leave the farm? He went into business, with his cousin in Chicago. His cousin had a grocery store and he went into the meat market part of the grocery store. Those days they pretty much did their own butchering, you know, and cutting up the meat. But it was not a financial success.

HONRUD: He wasn't happy on the farm?

JOYCE: He was, and they've always said it was unfortunate that he left. He was talked into it by his cousin to come to Chicago, and he was going to make a lot of money, but it didn't work out that way. So he salvaged enough out of it to buy a little house in Wilmington from these people that Mama had lived with before -- the Fullers. I think he paid \$800 for it. Then, of course, later on he tore that down and built the house that's there now.

HONRUD: He eventually was a carpenter, wasn't he?

JOYCE: Yes. When we first came back it was very hard sledding. I recall that. He worked for the McIntyres. That was such a crime that they tore down that McIntyre house. I remember he used to drive the Misses McIntyre into town in their surrey with the fringe on top. Then, I remember, Mama, too, to augment the family income.... there was a woman who taught the school where I eventually taught out in the country -- the Oak Grove School -- and she roomed and boarded with us.

HONRUD: Where was the Oak Grove School?

JOYCE: It was out the country road. This school was in a grove -- this



oak grove -- right across from the Augsons. It's gone now. There's no school house.

HONRUD: Do you know how your father learned to be a carpenter?

JOYCE: Yes, he took his apprenticeship under a man by the name of Fred Werden who was a carpenter -- who was a carpenter-contractor. And Dad learned from Mr. Werden, and then eventually he launched out on his own. So he was a carpenter-contractor for many years. I would say it must have been for 25 to 30 years, I guess.

HONRUD: Do you know what his wages were?

JOYCE: I remember he was paying his men at one time seventy-five cents an hour. Then it went up; the wages went up to a dollar an hour, and then I recall, when he had to pay \$1.25. Dad was astounded. "Nope," he said, "that's too much. There isn't any man that can earn \$1.25 an hour!" And I wonder what he would say now if he knew what the carpenters get. They must get \$10 or \$12. I know electricians get \$16 because I paid the \$16 to have an electrician out here to do a bit of work. And that really hurts me because Peter, my husband, was an electrician by trade and one of those men who could do anything. In fact, the 42 years that we were married, we never had a tradesman in the house to do any work. The only thing that he never did well -- and we often laughed about that -- was plastering. Never did that so well, but any of the other trades...so since I have been a widow and out here, I have to have work done; I certainly feel it.

HONRUD: How many men built a house? How many did he employ?





JOYCE: That would depend on what the work was and so forth, but he had Bob Fishback and Frank Barnes and another man, Mr. Farnsworth. He always had at least two men, sometimes three. And, of course, he would subcontract. Walter Giddings used to always do his mason work -- his fireplaces and such like that. See, Dad built the Goodwin home, too, where John and Gladys live. I think Gladys said that was about fifty-five years old or so. He built it for them when they were married, and they've been married over fifty years. It's in such a good condition, you know. The fireplace is so beautiful. The fireplace in our old home, too, where Mrs. Gunning lives now -- Walter Giddings built that also. It was a question of the carpenter-contractor taking the contract and then sublet to the others. Albert Schutten used to do most of his painting, interior decorating and so forth. He did excellent work. In fact, in that house of ours that I told you Mario Gunning now owns, we had a corner cupboard in a most beautiful shade of blue -- sort of a midnight blue, I guess, maybe not quite that dark -- royal blue. It's the same paint that he put on. She has never had it repainted. Can you imagine the quality of the paint in those days? He was an excellent interior decorator. This is Albert Schutten. He was the oldest of the Schutten family and there's that same paint. And that house now is... let's see, we're married forty-five years it would have been in June; it's that old. She's taken good care of it, of course. And whenever she would wash it, she washed it with care. It just goes to show the quality.

HONRUD: Many of his homes are still around.

JOYCE: Whose?

HONRUD: Your father's.





JOYCE: Well, let's see. I'm trying to think -- of course, they're old. He built the school house. That is, the Central School. Is that what they call it now?

HONRUD: Yes.

JOYCE: He built the first there, that is, the first part of it was the gym. And I don't know how many classrooms were on that. That was after I'd gone to Chicago. Then they added to it, of course, in later years when he wasn't doing work anymore.

HONRUD: How long did it take to build a house?

JOYCE: Well, I don't know what to tell you about that. It depended on the season, depended on the workmen; it depended on how quickly you could get the subcontractor to get his work done, you know, so that you could continue. I suppose, it would take a couple of months, anyway. If the season was so that you could work right along. I imagine it must have been that.

HONRUD: Do you recall any interesting or unusual stories your parents might have told about this area?

JOYCE: No, I really don't -- only the things I have already stated -- about the ice-cutting....Of course, all the work was done with horses, and my grandfather and uncle, particularly in through this area along the river here where they farmed, would dig up many of the artifacts of the Indians, such as arrowheads and hatchets and skinning knives, you know, and things like that. They often had here, they tell me, different people that would come over from Denmark. Some of them came and stayed and some of them



came and just visited, and some of them came and didn't like it and went back again. But I remember them telling at times it was quite a burden for my grandmother having so many mouths to feed at times and also locations to put them up for sleeping. I just can't recall anything that is of any particular interest at this point.

HONRUD: What were some of your earliest recollections as a young girl? What did you have to do around the house?

JOYCE: Duties -- of course, I always had them. /Laughter/ I know my mom felt that I should learn the things as every young girl and woman should learn, which, of course, is fine. Yes, I had my duties. I had my dishes to wash and my beds to make. I used to like to bake, I recall that. Of course, in those days you didn't open your package and stir it up.

/Laughter/ We used to start from scratch. And we used butter instead of oleo in those days. We didn't know anything about oleomargarine then. I remember I used to like to do baking. One of my earliest recollections was right out here, though. I think I must have been about four or five years old probably, and I had older cousins, boy cousins; and up where the windmill is now, where the stock used to come up to drink from the water tank -- the big water tank was always well-filled because the windmill used to pump. I had a rag doll that the outside of her was painted. I don't know whether you've seen any of those or not. They were quite popular for little girls to have these rag dolls, and they were stuffed with a cotton. And Fanny had gotten -- her name was Fanny -- quite dirty, so my cousins thought it would be nice to give Fanny a bath in the water trough. So they put Fanny into the water trough. I imagine she was the worst for wear. So when the time came to come home, I began looking for





Fanny. I didn't want to go home. We were living, of course, up on the prairie. I didn't want to go without Fanny, so the boys began to look kind of sheepish. They got questioned about it, so they had to produce Fanny. And when they handed her to me I almost fell out of the buggy. /Laughter/ She was so heavy -- she was all waterlogged -- /Laughter/ all the cotton in Fanny. I remember them telling about that, and the boys got a good scolding for it -- for giving Fanny the bath. So Fanny had to be destroyed and that was quite a blow to me. I had to give up Fanny. /Laughter/ I remembered that happened right here. Then as I grew into school age, of course, and had all the diseases that came any place near Wilmington -- that was when I had the diptheria and I seemed to be the only one in the community that had it, but I was very ill. In fact, I had so many things that the neighbors used to say, "Ed and Mary Wurtz will never raise that little girl." /Laughter/ She got raised -- God's providence, I guess. Dr. Williams, of course, was our family physician and our family friend. We were very, very fond of Doctor. He was so kindly. I remember his coming in with his horse and buggy. He always had a very fine garden and grew so many melons and was always so kind about giving them. So he had this special one he was going to bring in to me. He got out of his buggy and started up the walk and dropped the melon! It just squashed into many pieces. So I was quite crestfallen, /Laughter/ and he was disappointed, but I got a melon later.

HONRUD: You belonged to the Campfire Girls, didn't you?

JOYCE: Yes, we had a Campfire Organization. One of the high school teachers was the leader. Really, I can't recall much about it. We used to meet at the homes, and then we did do some camping out. I don't re-



call staying out overnight, really, I mean in camping facilities; but we used to go out into the woods. And I remember, we had gone up along the towpath. Have you heard of that? Up along the Mill Race, along there by the Kankakee. That used to be a very, very nice place to go and pick wild flowers and to picnic and to have our campfire and such like as that. It was rather a short-lived project, as I recall it. I suppose after this teacher, a Miss Heath was her name, left, it probably died down because of lack of interest in some one else taking over, you know.

HONRUD: How many girls were in it?

JOYCE: I think in this group that I was in, about ten, I'd say -- eight or ten.

HONRUD: What school did you go to?

JOYCE: Wilmington Public.

HONRUD: Which building was that?

JOYCE: That was the big, old Victorian three-story. The first two floors were grades, and the top floor was high school. I started to teach in the same room that I started first grade in. But then the second year I taught, I went into a portable -- they built a portable; and then the next year they put the second grade in a portable, too, because they needed space; and then eventually... I think Marjo has marked on there when the school came down in the thirties, I think. What did I do with that picture? She had it marked on the back. Here it is.. It was from 1870 to 1936. Nineteen thirty-six they took it down then. That was after I had gone to Chicago. I probably would have been weeping if I had been





around to see it torn down. /Laughter/

HONRUD: How many students were there in the school?

JOYCE: Well, I suppose we averaged, not many more than two hundred fifty or so. I think our rooms were maybe thirty, thirty-five in the grades. I don't think more than that, and what would that make? That would be over two hundred, wouldn't it, for grades? And then for high school I remember one class that graduated only Ida Schoenemann, Ida Lear. There was only one graduate. The year in '21 that I would have graduated, Bill Whitmore was the only boy and Marie Melcher, Laura Davy, and who were the others? I think there were maybe three or four girls. So the classes were small in high school. Of course, they usually, like still I'm quite sure, start out with the freshman class being quite large; by the time you get to the seniors, you've been depleted quite a bit. So I don't suppose that the high school totalled many more than one hundred. I suppose the whole student body was only around three hundred.

HONRUD: Do you remember -- just guess -- how many classrooms were in the school?

JOYCE: There was just one grade for each class. Well, in fact, not even that. Fifth and sixth were in one room, and seventh and eighth were in the other. That was upstairs.

HONRUD: And how many teachers?

JOYCE: Well, there would be first, second, third, fourth, and then fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth. And the fifth and sixth, you see, had the one teacher and the seventh and eighth had the other. You know, one





that could tell you a great deal about days of that time would be Marjo Gunning. She has a very good memory. Do you know who she is? She was Marjo Barnes.

HONRUD: You went to the high school for two years, then, right?

JOYCE: Yes.

HONRUD: And then it became taken off the accredited list?

JOYCE: Yes, it was taken off the accredited list. Then that's why three of us went to Joliet, and I graduated in 1921 from Joliet Township High School.

HONRUD: Can you speculate why they were taken off the list?

JOYCE: No, but it's too bad that I don't know, because you'd think that one would know, as pertinent as it was. I suppose facilities had a lot to do with it -- equipment and so forth. I think at that time the space -- you know -- they didn't have enough space, possibly. Also, they may not have had the faculty with the required degrees or so. That, I really couldn't say. It's possible Marjo might remember something like that, though. She's a couple of years older than I am. She would remember a little bit more, probably. She's been so local. She's been in Wilmington. She's never left, you know, like I did.

HONRUD: What kind of education did you have to have to be a teacher?

JOYCE: In those days they were even issuing emergency certificates. You could teach on an emergency certificate in Will County. You took an examination to get your teacher's certificate. Then there were require-



ments. You had to go certain semesters in the summer to keep your certificate in force. So when I was a senior, I took the examination; you were allowed three chances to pass all your tests. And I always laughed about that, too, because one of the subjects was pedagogy. You didn't know much about pedagogy when you hadn't even tried it. /Laughter/ I passed in two sessions. When I graduated in June, I had my certificate so that I could teach in September, in '21; and I was hired by the Board of Oak Grove School for my first teaching experience. Then I had to go to Normal in the summer for three summers. I went to DeKalb, which is now Northern Illinois, but was DeKalb Teacher's School at that time. And then I went down to Normal, Illinois to continue for a couple of summers to keep my certificate in force. Then, of course, after the years went on, I knew I wasn't going to teach anymore. I was raising my own family in the city. I just dropped my certificate. I kept it for a few years.

HONRUD: What was teaching like? Did you enjoy it?

JOYCE: Yes, I enjoyed teaching very, very much. I loved my youngsters in the first grade particularly. I was very, very fond of them. I was glad I came into town. But, of course, the school was very small out at Oak Grove. I had only six pupils.

HONRUD: Where did you live while you taught?

JOYCE: In Wilmington on the south side, I was telling you about -- on Kankakee Street. I walked back and forth. It was two miles. Sometimes I would get a ride with some of the farmers going out or coming back. We taught then from nine to four, depending on how much time you wanted to take for lunch -- half an hour or an hour for lunch. I remember some





nights. . . there was quite a wooded area that I had to pass on the road and by four o'clock in the wintertime it was getting quite dusk. I used to hurry like the dickens, I remember that, going past the woods. /Laughter/. Not that, I guess, there was anything to fear.

HONRUD: Do you remember what a teacher's salary would be?

JOYCE: Oh, yes. I got \$75 a month when I taught there and then, when I went into town, I got \$90. The last year I got \$100. For some reason our Board of Education, which was very kind of them, felt that the first grade teacher and the eighth grade teacher should have a little more remuneration, so we got a hundred dollar bonus for the year -- Miss Blake and I. So that was my salary. The first summer after I graduated I worked in the post office. Mr. Hughes was the postmaster, and I got \$10 a week -- \$40 for the month that I worked. At that time there was not only the First National Bank, but there was a Commercial National Bank where Klinger's Store is now. So I opened an account in both banks. I didn't want to show any favoritism by putting my money in one bank. So I opened up my account in both banks, and (I remember) I put \$10 in each account. /Laughter/

HONRUD: Let's talk about the Wilmington community now. How big was it?

JOYCE: Well, when we lived here in 1933, it was then, the billboard said, 1,400; and I was amazed to come back and find out the population -- 4,300 I think it says -- but they tell me that doesn't take in Lakewood Shores or Lavita Shores or any of that area. So there really are quite a few people in the community. I was commenting to several when I came back here to live how I knew so few people. I had been gone so long, but I



was assured by these girls that had never left -- Suzy Fitzpatrick and Marjo Gunning -- that they didn't know people either so it wasn't astounding that I shouldn't know, having been gone so long, because so many people had come in. Our first influx of newcomers was the strip mine, and that, of course, was many, many years ago. I don't know when the strip mine came in here. I think the strip mine came in 45 years ago or so -- something like that. That brought in the first newcomers, you know. Up until that time anybody who came into Wilmington to live was usually a retired farmer, aside from the few people that were local residents here. Then, of course, that really made a big influx. But many of those people stayed many years and seemed to be absorbed by the community in general. The next big move was the munitions areas, you know. That brought in so many, many people. It was APSA that brought in a lot of people, too. Of course, so many of them have had to go since then. But we were a community back in those days, I think, a rather well-knit community. I suppose there were classes -- there were cliques. We had only the three denominations of churches: The Presbyterian, where it is now; the Methodist, where the library is now; and then St. Rose, the Catholic Church, where it is now. So we had just those three denominations. I remember for our baccalaureate services. . . do they have those nowadays? . . Well, they took turns going from one church to the other, which I thought was very fine. I had heard of some smaller communities, too, where they used to vote where to go. Well, that depended on how many there were from the one church or the other. Naturally, that had the weight. The ministers and Father Murray who was a pastor here for many, many years -- they had their nice, compatible way of doing from one year to the other. It seemed to work out very well.





HONRUD: Do you remember what the police or fire department was like?

JOYCE: O course, it was a volunteer, I guess, as it still is. I believe Nye Osborn was a fire chief for a while. I don't know how it's worked now. There were no uniforms at that time. They were mostly merchants, you know, that could get away. I remember one interesting thing that happened a good many years ago -- there was a fire that had apparently been set. Well, we used to call that area Canada; I guess they call it Northcrest now. The fire bell rang and most of the merchants donned their fire equipment and away they went; and while they were taking care of the fire up there, Veaches' Jewelry Store was robbed. So they kind of figured it was a put-up job, you know, to get the people out of the Front Street. I remember that incident. The firemen were the local people. I think they were allotted, if I'm right about that, \$50 a year, I believe, was their salary -- the firemen for their volunteering. Mr. Joe Thompson was the mayor for a long time, and Mr. Herb Kahler had been before that. My dad was an alderman of the Third Ward; he worked under Mr. Thompson. And at that time Wilmington didn't have the sewer or the city water at all. Then they put up the standpipe and there were enough of, as they used to say, the farmers that came in who didn't see any reason for having inside toilets. /Laughter/ They had gotten along without them, and so forth. So they called dad "Standpipe Wurtz" because dad had gone out to get the standpipe. So he was defeated by this other man who come in from the country who didn't see any reason to have the water and the sewer. /Laughter/

HONRUD: What would happen if a fire broke out? How would they fight the fire? Do you remember?





JOYCE: We had a fire bell; we didn't have a siren. They had their equipment -- the best they could. I don't even recall them pulling by horses. I think they pulled it themselves, you know -- their chemicals and what they had. Then, of course, after we did get the water in the town, they were able to bring their hose and get to the hydrants. It was quite a job, I'm sure.

HONRUD: Was the fire station in the same place?

JOYCE: The fire station was across the street, what is now the city hall. The back end had a couple of rooms for the jail back there, too, with bars on it. The fire engines were there. And everybody went to the fire; as soon as you heard the bell, you know, you tried to find out where the fire was, if you didn't call the operator and find out. /Laughter/

HONRUD: Did they have a policeman?

JOYCE: They had a constable, I guess you'd call him. . . Mr. Vanderveer for years was our constable, and he would walk around downtown with his cane or his stick. I don't suppose there was too much need for policing. Once in a while he used to tell about somebody who would get unruly from drink, you know, and have to be apprehended and maybe cooled off a bit in one of the jail rooms. The only vandalism that I recall was at Halloween time. They used to knock over the outside toilets and they used to take the pickets off the fences, and they'd come out to the out-lying areas maybe and get a plow or a cultivator. Of course, in those days the coal-shed was part of the building -- the school building here. It was coal furnace, of course. It was quite a shed, but these boys would manage to get some piece of implement up on top of it, it seemed. In those days



and maybe two or three days before Halloween they'd have to put on extra police. I remember Dad used to be one of the police, too. They told about one time they knocked over the toilet and the poor old man was sitting in it. /Laughter/ Well, at any rate, those days are gone. But, as I say, I don't recall real vandalism aside from the Halloween tricks that they did. They weren't out for marking up things like the kids do nowadays. They used to soap the windows. But again that was all Halloween; that was supposed to be funny in those times.

HONRUD: What did the main street look like then? Did it look the same?

JOYCE: Just about the same. Of course, the Stewart House was there; and part of the paper mill that burned, you know, a couple of years ago was right down there. Building-wise there certainly hasn't been much change. Mr. Nelson has fixed up his frontage there. That used to be Osburn's. Osburn had furniture there, too. Then their grocery store was right beside it called the Osborn Building. Aside from the few frontages Be-Gay, of course, has changed. That used to be a grocery store on that corner. Granzigs had a restaurant before Madeline and Irene Dorsey took over. The First National Bank was, as you know, where that Home and Loan is. Across the way used to be two maiden ladies by the name of Kinsella. Is it upholstering or antiques right across from the bank corner there?

HONRUD: It's been both recently.

JOYCE: Whatever. That used to be a millinery there, and these two maiden ladies used to make hats. In those days they used to make their hats -- beautiful things! Kate, the one sister, used to wear a hat to church -- to mass. And then the next day you'd see the hat in the





window for sale. /Laughter/ Usually they employed a milliner. Sometimes it was a local girl. One of our neighbors, Miss Ryan, Winifred Ryan, used to make hats for them. And then sometimes they would even import somebody to come in. It was quite a business making hats. Now you can't get anybody to wear a hat.

HONRUD: As far as transportation, did many people use the train?

JOYCE: Yes, it was our only way. There were no buses, you know. Mr. Gadberry started the first bus transportation between Joliet and Wilmington -- Wilmington and Joliet, rather. He used to pick up in Elwood. He and a couple others were killed crossing the track in Elwood to make a pickup. Bertha McQueen and I think there was someone else who was killed there. Yes, of course, by the train. They had one that went up in the morning -- The "Accommodation" they called it. I remember the Wabash here; this goes back to my grandfather's days. He used to ship his cream into Chicago, and they used to put it on here at Ritchey. That was the milk train. I think it started from Forrest about five o'clock in the morning and used to get here around seven. By the time it got into Chicago, it was nine or so. If the farmer hadn't arrived, the engineer could wait until he got there and got his can on. You know, people lived more leisurely. I don't know. Were we more accommodating? Were we more cognizant of other people's needs and so forth? I think, maybe in those days. As I say, there were those little things that now you couldn't think about. You must be on schedule and that grand rush to get through things. But many of the farmers did that. They'd shipped their cream in, you see. And also, their stock for butchering. They would ship that in, too.



HONRUD: The train depot was in the same place where that building stands today?

JOYCE: At Ritchey or Wilmington?

HONRUD: Let's talk about both.

JOYCE: Ritchey was the Wabash, of course, out there. I think they've taken it down. There's nothing there at Ritchey now, I guess. There's just the elevator now. There used to be a little station there. There was a train that went earlier, and if you wanted it, you had to flag it yourself. If it was the season when it was still dark, they used to light a newspaper for a flag. Then it would stop for you. That one train didn't have a regular stop unless you flagged it down. Yes, the station is right there now where it is in Wilmington. Mr. Frank Breen, Suzy Fitzpatrick's uncle, was the station agent there for years and years and years.

HONRUD: When did cars first become popular?

JOYCE: You mean to go back and forth? Well, I learned to drive Dad's Model-T in about 1916, I think. In those days you didn't need any permit or any license either for driving. Somebody in the family just taught you how to drive. Let's see, 1916 there were quite a few cars around at that time. Then the Model-A Ford came in, and, I remember, those who could afford. . . I remember a Mr. Dan Barrett -- he was a veterinarian -- and he had a Cadillac. There were no doors, you know. It was just open and you sat way up high like this. And Mr. Barrett never knew how to drive, but he used to have a young boy at the time,





Ross Loudon, drive for him. And if anything went wrong with the car, why, he'd always say to Ross, "Give it a little ile (oil)." He was very Irish. So one time Mr. Barrett decided to drive anyway. He did imbibe quite a bit. So he got in the car, and he got one of his friends with him. So they were going around very nicely up and down the street, and they went down around the railroad track -- down in that area -- and they ran out of gas. There they had to sit because he didn't know what else to do. /Laughter/ These things, of course, don't amount to anything. I suppose, from about that time in, they must have been used a good deal. Oh, not a good deal, but if you could afford to have one. That was still back in the days when you'd meet a team or a horse. You were liable to have a wreck. The horse would jump and head clear into the fence. If you were driving a horse, you used to dread thinking you might meet a car. I think it was the noise perhaps. Cars were awfully noisy. I don't know what it was that frightened the horse, but it took the horses a long time to get accustomed to it.

HONRUD: Do you remember a stable in Wilmington?

JOYCE: Oh, yes.

HONRUD: Where was it?

JOYCE: There where the Ford Motor moved out. A man by the name of Weir used to have a stable there. Mr. James Brophy had a stable about where Schmalz Greenhouse is located. And then I can remember when Billy McIntosh, too, used to be a wagon maker. And that was down between the Stewart House and the paper mill out there where that building is now Crichton. It was interesting to see him making wagon wheels,





you know. Where the Knight's Inn is now where Kurth's was, there was a blacksmith's shop. "Charlie the Swede" they used to call him. "Charlie the Swede" was the father of Jerry Johnson. Jerry is about my age. Oh, how we used to like to watch Mr. Johnson shoe the horse and see the big forge, you know. Then right next to him in the end of that building that used to be the library. . . it's the back of the Home and Loan now. . . Mr. Hillard had a harness place. That was interesting, too, to see him make the harness out of the leather, you know.

HONRUD: Let's talk about what I've heard termed as Frostville. Can you tell us about who lived there -- where they came from -- any of the ancestors?

JOYCE: No, I can't. They used to kind of migrate from Southern Illinois. And I'm trying to think of the name of the town. There were relatives, too, by the name of Nowman and Cahoon. They were interrelated. They lived over there. There was one large frame house where the original, Mr. Bill Frost, lived. As they married, and went out around in the area. . . but that was right in the area of what would be the south side of the railroad track. As I say, I think they have some government buildings in there now, some housing. Aside from having the little kids in school, I don't know about their parentage. I used to in the wintertime wish that the poor little folks wouldn't come to school because they were so poorly clad, some of them, you know; and they'd be so cold, and you'd have to rub their poor little hands and feet to get the frost out of them. They used to come despite that because I guess they were warm and comfortable when they were in school. So they put forth the effort to come. There were some handicapped, and also some



mentally handicapped. There had been too much intermarriage. There were quite a few of them that <sup>had</sup> /to be put in Lincoln. That's the home for little children handicapped mentally. I used to wonder what kind of offspring some of them would produce, you know. I think there are not many of them. There is a man here in town, Cubby, they call him -- Cubby Frost -- Harold Frost; I had him in school. He was a nice lad, real nice. He's in one of these pictures here. I know there were several who worked in the mill with my husband when he was there as an electrician. They were the laborers, of course. There were two of them I remember particularly. They called them Black Baldy and White Baldy. I don't know what their first names were at all, but that's the way they distinguished them. And I remember that the wives used to meet them when it was pay-day and stand around on the front street around the grocery stores waiting for them -- the husbands -- to come. I suppose, in some cases, it would be necessary because maybe the husbands would get into the saloons first, you know, before they got to the grocery store.

HONRUD: You said that your husband said that Mr. Frost was an extremely hard worker.

JOYCE: Yes, yes, if you wanted to put that in. But not my husband, no, my father. Dad, when he would have an excavation to do, would employ Mr. Bill Frost. He had a big scoop and a team of horses, and Dad always said that he would give you an honest day. And he was just a fine man. They've been gone, Mother and Father Frost, for many, many years; and, I suppose, some of the younger generation are, too. But the only one that I know now. . . I wonder if there's any Nowman's. I had two or three Nowman youngsters. But I remember Harold -- he came up to me in the







A and P a few months ago; and he said, "You were Miss Wurtz, weren't you? My first grade teacher." "Oh," I said, "indeed I was, and you're Cubby, I bet." I knew they called him that. I said, "You're Harold." He is a real nice lad.

HONRUD: Let's talk about the entertainment that they had. Didn't they have a town play?

JOYCE: Yes, every season. Every winter particularly they'd have one. It was usually under the auspices of the Knights of Pytheus. I don't know whether that fraternal group is still in existence or not. They had a directress who would come in -- Chick Perkins King was her name. She and her husband would stay at the Stewart House. He was sort of her manager, but she was the director. They put on the plays.

HONRUD: Do you remember the names? Can you recall a couple?

JOYCE: Oh, dear. I think one was called "A Girl From the West." I wish I had those programs. Then sometimes it wouldn't be just a play. It would be a series of acts, you know, like vaudeville acts. It was all local talent. Art Nelson was very, very talented, and Dr. Shipley, too -- he was a dentist. She just gathered anybody. At that time Peter was staying at the Stewart House, too, working at the paper mill. He had been sent down to do some electrical work. So that's where I met him -- at the play. He was in "The Man About Town." I remember this little skit he was in. /Laughter/

HONRUD: How did you go about getting a part? Did you try out?

JOYCE: Well, I guess they just knew that you had talent for one thing



or another. /Laughter/ I don't ever remember trying out, no.

HONRUD: You used to sing, or still do sing?

JOYCE. I used to. No, I don't anymore. No, I'm just rusty.

HONRUD: Were you in the choir?

JOYCE: Yes, I was in the choir -- St. Rose's choir. I began in the girls' choir there -- rather children's choir which turned out to be girls' choir -- when I was about 12 years old, I guess. There was a Connor family here. Margaret Connor was a music teacher, and she started our group. The Dorsey girls were in it, and the two Moran girls -- Genevieve and Florence Moran. In fact, Florence Moran Wainwright sang in the choir for fifty years. I used to come down to sing at funerals and weddings, as I mentioned the other day, until the children got in school and then I couldn't do that any longer. Since I came back, just because of the nostalgic idea behind it, I've been singing in the choir -- not that I'm any asset at all. . . I did enjoy it a great deal.

HONRUD: You mentioned you met your husband at the Stewart House.

JOYCE: I met him at the play, really -- not at the Stewart House; but when we were practicing for the play, he worked there. He lived at the Stewart House, you see, while he was working.

HONRUD: Where were the plays held?

JOYCE: They were held in the Opera House. The Opera House was the second story of where Klinger's Jewelry is. You went in the side door -- the side street there -- and you went up the steps , up, up steps. And





there was a long hall and then Dr. Shipley had an office, and I don't know what else was there. Then it also opened into this large auditorium room with a stage, and it even had two boxes -- one on each side. That was our Opera House.

HONRUD: It's an apartment now, isn't it?

JOYCE: I don't know what's there now. Donahoe's owned it. Donahoe's owned the Opera House.

HONRUD: What was the Stewart House like?

JOYCE: It's just as the picture shows here. Don't you remember? You've seen it.

HONRUD: But was it any different then?

JOYCE: No, just the same. The one side was the dining room, and the other side was the big lobby. You went up the stairs that were in the middle, and the rooms were upstairs.

HONRUD: Do you remember who owned it?

JOYCE: Yes, for a long while the Barrys owned it. I understand Mrs. Barry now is a Mrs. Summers who lives in California. But all during the time. . . I don't know . . . different ones have had it, in the last few years. I see Dr. Paoletti had it for a while. They tell me he was going to do some remodeling but found out it was going to cost too much to do. So I don't know who owned it last. Who had it when they knocked it down, I wonder -- who owned it then, do you know?

HONRUD: No, I don't.





JOYCE: And why did they knock it down? Just a question of knocking down? /Laughter/

HONRUD: They've torn down most of the historic sites.

JOYCE: Haven't they! Of course, this Soldiers' Widows' Home. . . But I think the crime of the century was the McIntyre House, because that could have been used. And it seems so strange that there was no more civic pride in the community itself, that they wouldn't try in some way. I know Alma Barnes tried. I've read many of her articles. You know, she tried to promote some interest here to keep it. You would have thought they could have gotten some help. Now, like in Galena. . . that old town Galena they have restored so many things there. Most towns that would have a beautiful building like we had would have that civic pride that they'd want to try to keep it. But I understood it was the Personal Products themselves. And then they took down that other beautiful one at the creek. It wasn't beautiful, but I mean they had restored it -- that old brick house that used to belong to Kungley's years ago; I think a Leonard owned that, too.

HONRUD: Across from the bridge?

JOYCE: Yes. They knocked that down, too. That dated way back -- 1837 or earlier. That was a crime, too. But the big mansion of McIntyres' was really dreadful. That was really a shame. Now about the only thing that we have is the Schutten House. They have repaired that so beautifully. There are a few older houses, but I mean nothing that would have the real historic value that the McIntyre Estate had. It's really too bad.

HONRUD: Where was your husband born?



JOYCE: He was Chicago born. And , as I say, he came down here to do work at the paper mill because Mr. Leonard was the president of the stockyards back in those days. That is, Mr. Leonard, Sr., the father of Art Leonard who had this place. And in those days the Chicago city apparently was not furnishing the electricity for the stockyards. They had what they called a "produce terminal." They furnished all their own electricity. That was where Peter worked, and that was why he was sent down here. I met him down here.

HONRUD: He was an electrician?

JOYCE: Yes. So often we laughed because he used to go home on the weekends, and he had started home this one very cold weekend and couldn't get through because the roads were blocked. So had to come back. There was a basketball game in the gym, and so he came up to the basketball game. We were talking, I guess, because I hadn't met him. So he said, "How would you like a soda?" -- or something like that. /Laughter/ We often laugh at that because it was so cold. And I said, "No, but you can walk home with me if you want to." /Laughter/ That was the beginning. Of course, Mom thought he was such a nice young man, which he was, of course. He was short; Peter wasn't much taller than I, and I said, "But he's too little. I can't use him." /Laughter/ That was a family joke, too, but we managed.

HONRUD: This was in the winter, then?

JOYCE: Yes.

HONRUD: How long was it before you were married?





JOYCE: I think we went together about two years.

HONRUD: And how old were both of you?

JOYCE: Older than most people -- 27. He's 6 months younger than I. He was 26 and I was 27, and we married on June the 28th in 1930. Our Bob didn't come until '34. We were married almost 5 years when Bob came.

HONRUD: You were married in St. Rose?

JOYCE: Yes.

HONRUD: Is it still about the same?

JOYCE: St. Rose has not changed, no, not like many churches. They have put the altar table down in front of the main altar now, because, if you've been in a Catholic church, you know it used to be that mass was celebrated with the priest with his back to the people. Then since Vatican II and the changes in many of the rubrics and the rituals, they have put an altar table down in front of the main altar, and the priest celebrates the mass facing the people. Have you ever been to a Catholic church?

HONRUD: No, I've never been to a Catholic mass.

JOYCE: Well, you should, son, just for your own information.

HONRUD: I take that back. We went to a camp at Shaw-wa-na-see, and a Catholic priest came down and did the service, but, of course, it wasn't in the church.

JOYCE: Haven't you been in St. Rose's, though?



HONRUD: I sang once when the Community Choir got together for Thanksgiving service.

JOYCE: Oh, yes, I was there, too. We were all up in the gallery. That was beautiful, wasn't it? I mean, the cooperation, and the church was just full. Now that was a year ago, wasn't it? Two years ago. Because wasn't it last year that we were at the Baptist church? Was that the Thanksgiving service?

HONRUD: That's right.

JOYCE: I didn't go. I think two or three. . . Bea Glenny and Milly Wallen went from our choir, but I didn't feel that I was that much of an asset to go. There was not the number of people, if you recall.

HONRUD: I didn't go.

JOYCE: There was not the number of people that there had been before. I wonder if there isn't something lacking in the last few years in community spirit. It's because everybody, I think, is busy with their own individual affairs. Back in those days you depended, I think, on others. There wasn't any radio, and there wasn't any TV. There weren't those things that make you segregate somehow. If you wanted to be with people, you had to go to where the people were. Now it doesn't seem to make that much difference because you can go in and turn on your TV and you've got all the entertainment you want. I think there's really something missing there in community spirit. I don't know how you'd ever get it back again because it's just the change of times. Our mode of living is so different now, and then there are individuals. Now, I need people, I really do. Now some people are self-sufficient within themselves or within one or two, and





they don't have to have anybody. But I so appreciated Helen Francis' interest and concern about me, and I had such a beautiful evening on Christmas Eve at their home, you know. They had their Williamsburg dinner there, and I did so appreciate it because my own family, being so far away, it isn't possible for us to get together on occasions that most families can. And that's why I go into town very frequently, because I can meet with friends and find places that I can go.

HONRUD: Where did you and your husband live when you were first married?

JOYCE: In this home that Dad had built for us -- now the Dr. Henry Gunning home. When they first bought, Marjo said the doctor said, "If we live here for ten years, I'll be satisfied." And they lived there 31 years before he died. We were only there a little bit less than three years before we went to Chicago. It was during the Depression, of course. We rented it then for two or three years before we sold it to a Dr. Stanton. He was an osteopath in Joliet -- a blind man. I think it's he, I'm quite sure, who sold to the Gunnings. But if you want anymore local information, I would certainly advise Marjo because she remembers way back when. And, as I say, not having left here, she probably would remember a little bit more about the community in that interim of 38 years.

HONRUD: Why did you leave Wilmington?

JOYCE. Because Mr. Joyce was let out at the plant. It was those horrible Depression days. We had married, I suppose, in the height of it in '30, but we didn't know down here. We didn't really realize, you know, what the Depression was until the next few years when it really seemed to hit.

HONRUD: What did he do in Chicago?





JOYCE: Well, he went to work for this Joslyn Manufacturing and Supply, which are makers of poleline equipment. I had a cousin who was in an executive position there, and Peter was given the job as a mechanic's helper. But he was only there for about two weeks when he went into the electrical department. From there he was in charge of the electrical department -- 37th and Morgan is where their plant is. When we went to Chicago, he was getting \$90 a month. Imagine -- \$90 a month! We got \$35 for our home here, and we were paying \$35. I remember I had my budget envelopes. I was expecting our Bob, and it was really very rugged. I recall after Bob was born -- he was a little fellow -- Peter did a great deal of maintenance work on the weekends after the plant was closed down for safety features. So my sister, who was a young girl then -- my adopted sister -- came up and stayed with me that first summer. And we walked, I would say it must have been a good three miles, to a park and trundled Bob in his little "Taylor Tot." I had ten cents that I could spend. In fact, I had sent Margaret down with some milk bottles to get the ten cents. When we got there, we had a Dixie Cup. In those days you could get a Dixie Cup for five cents, and a double Popsicle was five cents. So that's how I spent the ten cents, and the baby had the Dixie Cup. Margaret and I shared the Popsicle. So we had had a big afternoon. Years later I told our other son, Jim, who came along in '42 when things were much better, the story. He said, "You mean to tell me that my mother only had ten cents to spend?" I said, "Your mother was doing well to have ten cents to spend on such frivolity!" /Laughter/ A Dixie Cup and a double Popsicle! And then I had to send the bottles back to get the ten cents. Oh, it was terribly rugged.

HONRUD: How many children did you raise in Chicago?



JOYCE: The three of them. They were all born in Chicago. I thought when I first had to go to Chicago, "How will I ever raise a family in Chicago?" I guess they grew up in spite of Chicago. But they had fine educations, of course; things worked out very, very well.

HONRUD: What do you feel through the years has had the biggest effect on people's lives?

JOYCE: The biggest effect on people's lives?

HONRUD: What has changed things the most?

JOYCE: That's really quite a question, Jay. I suppose, there are several factors, no doubt, but one of them, I imagine, in the forefront is transportation. I would say that. When you think in my span of life from horse-and-buggy to moon travel, you know, it is fantabulous == fantastic. That, I think, would be something. One of the things I decry about the change is the apparent lack of religion. I mean, people seem to have lost the fact that, after all, the Almighty is our all-governing hand. Man has failed man all through the centuries. Man of today == modern man == I think, has altogether too much confidence in his fellowman. He needs to get back to the worship of the Divine Providence. Not the worship of the Providence, but the Divine worship of the Almighty, who in His providential care, is still taking care of the world. You know, they have forgotten Him. You can't help but wonder how long He's going to allow man to go his merry way before there's a great stop put to it. And then we know, too, there have been great disasters. And it's always in the times of disaster that man does turn to God, but when things are going along so well. . . In America we have certainly had so many things to be







thankful for and forget about it -- all these blessings. I think that I feel in talking with others, too, that there is a little more a trend to return to religion -- to religious practices and so forth. There's been, as you and I were talking about the other day, not the church attendance that there was. I know what it was that I was going to say the other day when I went off on a tangent. I was going to say that we met this couple that had just come from the Methodist Church and they were decrying -- they were older people -- farmers -- how few people there were at service. They said there were only 84 in attendance. That was a couple of Sundays ago. Then last Sunday we happened to meet them, again, at Bryan's after their service, and they said there were a few more. Of course, the older generation that we are -- we're saying what's the matter? Why don't people come to the services anymore? I know in the Catholic church we have lost the youth in so many, many cases.

HONRUD: Do you recall when St. Rose School was built? Or were you gone?

JOYCE: Yes, I was gone. It would be in the '30's. I think, maybe in the '40's -- maybe '39, '40, '41, or '42 -- something like that. Because there was no parochial school when I was here.

HONRUD: Mrs. Joyce, as we have established, you left Wilmington for many years. What made you decide to come back?

JOYCE: Well, because Mr. Joyce had retired. Our working days had finished, we thought -- obligatory working days. And we were toying with the idea of what would we do. Having a lot in Florida, I thought that now maybe that would be somewhere to locate. At that time our younger son was in Florida. But we took a trip west; and when we came back here, Mama's



tenants had left and the house was vacant, and my good Peter said, "We're coming down here to retire."

And, of course, Mama was well-pleased with that thought. Even though we were just going to be in four rooms here, we thought we could manage.

I've put this on since I've been here -- this porch room. It was just these four rooms in here. But we were going to do it in easy stages -- our move -- because we had our house in Chicago to sell, and he wanted to move everything that he had up there down here to the garage and take it by easy stages. So we were just back and forth really for ten months when he was stricken with the heart attack. So that was God's will. But I've been very grateful that he had made the decision for us to come here, because if it hadn't been made before he left, I would probably have been in much more of a quandary as to what I might think would have been the better thing to do. I don't think I would have even considered going with any of the children. But I just don't know. But at any rate, that was God's way to do it. So that's why I'm here. It was so unfortunate that Mom should break her hip. But that, too, one has to accept. So I'm very happy to be back where my roots are pretty deep. /Laughter/

HONRUD: Thank you very much, Mrs. Joyce. I really enjoyed interviewing you. It was really a pleasure.

JOYCE: Thank you, dear. I hope it's been something that's a little informative and maybe even constructive. I don't know where the construction would come in. /Laughter/





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